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Careers in the Bureau of Labor Statistics

Think of the words, "Bureau of Labor Statistics." Now draw a mental picture of who works there. What's the image?

Does the picture include a Mr. Peepers character sporting a starched white shirt and a green eye shade around his wrinkled brow? And is he hunched over an old wooden desk, pencil in hand, adding up a column of figures about five feet long?

We hope that isn't your image of our agency, but if it is you wouldn't be the first person to have it. With a name like Bureau of Labor Statistics and a proud history of over a hundred years, we sometimes are associated with rather dull work done by old-fashioned methods. But nothing could be further from the reality. We hope you will take a few moments to read through this brochure to find out about careers and the challenging work at the Bureau of Labor Statistics and how you might fit into a thoroughly modern organization that formulates and uses some of the world's most advanced knowledge in computer science, economics, and statistical techniques.

Since its establishment in 1884, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has gathered and published information about our Nation's economy. That information satisfies a number of criteria, including relevance to current social and economic issues; timeliness; accuracy and consistently high statistical quality; and impartiality in both subject matter and presentation. This sensitive statistical data has become the basis for setting national economic policy affecting employment, unemployment, prices, wages, productivity, industrial relations, and occupational safety and health.

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Employment Information

Generally, the Bureau has a continuing need for economists, mathematical statisticians, and computer specialists. It has a more limited need for administrative and financial specialists, and for many types of technicians and assistants. The number of vacancies is difficult to predict due to changes in program direction and staffing trends. However, turnover of personnel is continual and some positions are available at most times.

Employment in the Bureau of Labor Statistics is restricted by law to U.S. citizens except in cases where U.S. citizens are not available.

All qualified applicants receive consideration for employment without regard to sex, race, creed, color, age, or national orgin.

Qualifications for professional jobs in the Bureau vary according to the type of job. Most professional jobs require a bachelor's degree or its equivalent in experience. Specific qualifications and educational requirements are described in BLS pamphlets available from the Bureau for economists, mathematical statisticians, and computer specialists positions.

The Office of Personnel Management (formerly the U.S. Civil Service Commission) offers Federal employment information through a network of Federal Job Information Centers located throughout the United States.

Virtually all positions in BLS are in the "competitive service." This means that applicants must have competitive civil service status or be appointed from a register established by the Office of Personnel Management.

Training

To foster an atmosphere conducive to professional growth, BLS encourages an open exchange of information among the staff members and promotes a continuing education program. Training opportunities are readily available. On-the-job training, the opportunity to attend courses at various universities, and attendance at conferences and seminars are among the many opportunities financed by the Bureau. The BLS training program is designed to increase your effectiveness on the job and also give you the opportunity to progress toward your personal career goals.

Awards

The Bureau seeks to attract top talent, and we give special recognition to those who perform at above average levels. Awards are granted for:

- work performance that is above the acceptable level
- career service that is marked by sustained superior quality and efficiency over a period of years
- noteworthy achievement by an employee or a group of employees
- outstanding efforts to promote equal employment opportunities
- suggestions that improve efficiency.

Pay and Promotions

The majority of the positions at BLS are classified under the Federal Government's "General Schedule" (GS). The duties and responsibilities of a job determine the GS number or grade level assigned to the job. The enclosed pay table shows that grade levels range from GS-1 through GS-18. However, most entry level professional positions begin at GS-5, GS-7, or GS-9.

Generally, new employees are appointed at Step 1 of the appropriate GS grade level. You will receive periodic salary increases called "within-grade-increases" or "step increases" if your work is at an acceptable level. You may advance to the next higher step in a grade level every year until you reach the 4th step. At that point you may advance every 2 years up to the 7th step. Beyond the 7th step, the waiting period is 3 years up to the top of the salary range.

Promotional opportunities are excellent at the Bureau, and as a result, most new entry-level professional employees who are doing an acceptable job are promoted to higher grades. Although our mission is large, we are small enough in size to both encourage and reward achievement and talent.

Under the Bureau's "career ladder" program, entry-level professionals can expect the opportunity to receive grade increases on a regular basis, up to GS-11. Generally, you must spend one year in a grade before you can be considered for a promotion to the next higher level. In professional positions, promotions are granted in two-grade intervals. For instance, a promotion from GS-7 will advance you to GS-9, and so on. Beyond GS-11, promotions are granted in one-grade intervals.

Opportunities for promotion above GS-11 are also excellent. These are senior positions which usually require experience, expert knowledge, and leadership. In these positions, you will have a direct hand in decisions on data and reports that affect every American in one way or another. The Bureau has a merit staffing system to insure that the best qualified persons are selected for these positions.

Work Hours

The standard BLS workweek is 40 hours—8 hours a day and 5 days a week, Monday through Friday. However, to help meet the special needs of its employees, the Bureau has negotiated with the employee union a flexible work plan which allows employees to be flexible in their work week to meet personal or family obligations. The Bureau is closed on ten legal holidays during the year. You will receive regular pay for these holidays.

Vacation/Leave

As a Federal employee with BLS, you will be entitled to liberal vacation and sick leave benefits.

The amount of time spent in Federal srvice determines the rate at which vacation time (commonly called annual leave) is credited. Employees with less than 3 years of service earn 13 days of annual leave per year. Employees with more than 3 years of service but less than 15 earn 20 days of leave. Employees with 15 years or more earn 26 days per year.

In addition to annual leave, Federal employees receive a total of 13 days of sick leave a year to be used in the event of illness, injury, or medical and dental appointments.

Medical Benefits

The Bureau offers you an opportunity to provide good medical and hospital care for yourself and your dependents through payroll deductions, with the Government paying up to 75 percent of the cost, depending on the type of plan and option you choose. A wide variety of health benefit plans are available to Federal employees.

In addition, you are given an opportunity to obtain low-cost life insurance protection regardless of your age, physical condition, or sex under the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Plan.

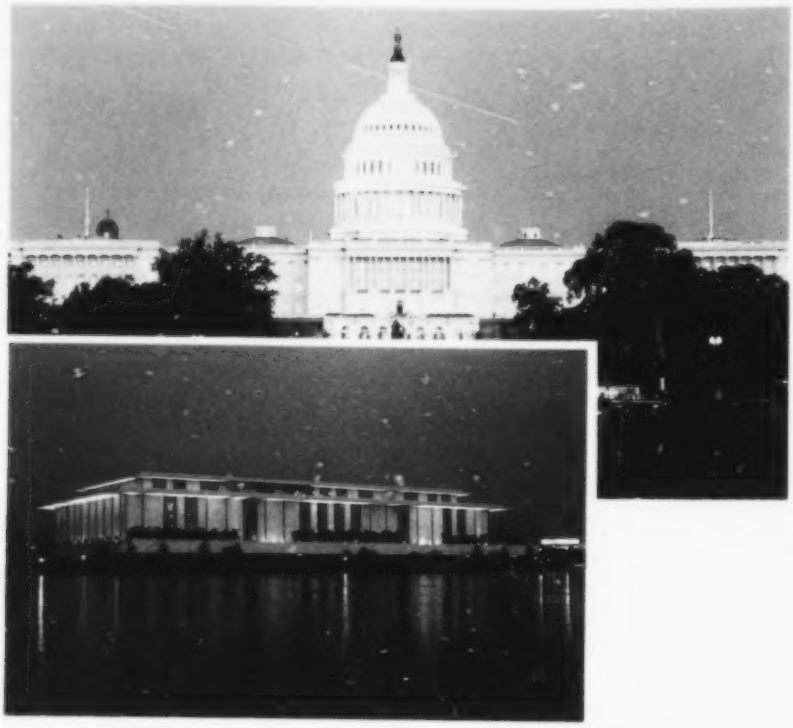
Retirement

The Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) is the new Federal retirement system for Federal employees hired after December 31, 1983. FERS is a three-tiered retirement plan. The three components are:

- –Social Security Benefits
- –Basic Retirement Benefit Plan
- –Savings Plan.

The FERS retirement system features "portability" and "flexibility," and enables you to take an active role in securing your future. Should you leave Federal service, you may take most of your benefits with you.

Living in Washington



Washington is a beautiful and exciting city, boasting world famous buildings, monuments, museums, and parks in addition to being the seat of Government for our Nation. Entertainment in the city is varied and virtually unlimited; whether you prefer theater or football, opera or tennis, Washington has many indoor and outdoor facilities and a wide base of people who share your interests. The visual and performing arts flourish in the D.C. area where the large number of theaters, concert halls, and galleries offer alternatives to suit every taste. Sports enthusiasts are visible everywhere with public sports fields, bike trails, golf courses, and boat docks all available right in the city. Washington is centrally located on the Eastern Seaboard close to such diverse places as New York City and the mountains of West Virginia. The city has easy access to New England ski resorts and Florida beaches, in addition to those of Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and the Carolinas. Washington is also noted as an international city with a diverse culture and an interesting history.

Many housing alternatives are available in the communities of Washington, Maryland, and Virginia, including conventional houses, townhouses, condominiums, rental apartments, and houses to share. Washington also has one of the most advanced transportation systems in the Nation. The Metro subway and bus lines run throughout the city and extend far into the suburban areas. In short, lifestyles in Washington are flexible and adaptable. In offering a great variety of options for almost every aspect that touches your life, Washington gives you a choice.

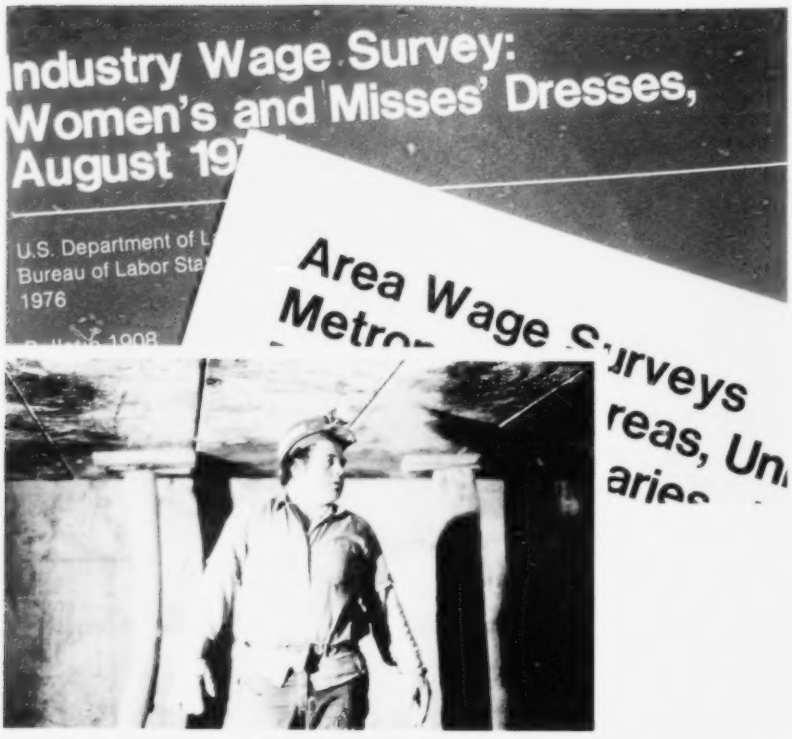
The Work of the Bureau of Labor Statistics

Millions of Americans look to the Bureau of Labor Statistics each month for answers to questions like these: Is unemployment going up or down? How much have prices changed since last month? What's happening to wages? As a principal monitor of the Nation's economic pulse, the Bureau makes available a vast amount of information for the needs of many users. These include government officials, business firms, labor organizations, researchers, and teachers and students as well as the general public.

To provide this information, the Bureau's professional staff—economists, statisticians, computer specialists, writers and editors, and others—design and conduct surveys, process and analyze the results, prepare news releases, and write, edit, and publish articles and reports in the *Monthly Labor Review* and other Bureau publications. They also answer congressional inquiries, requests from other government agencies, and queries from the news media. Administrative personnel provide services that support these activities. In their work, Bureau professionals use the latest research methods and computer systems and coordinate their efforts with other specialists in their fields.

Most staff members develop and apply their expertise in one of five broad subject areas. Others work in support offices that cut across subject matter lines. A brief description of the programs and staff activities in each of the major areas of the Bureau's work follows.

Compensation and working conditions



BLS studies of employee compensation—wages and benefits—include a broad range of data on workers' earnings in many occupations, industries, and areas. From temporary help services to iron and steel foundries, and whether in New York or Kokomo, data are available on hours and earnings.

The Bureau also develops information on employee benefits—the number of holidays, vacation days, provisions for health insurance, pensions, maternity and paternity leave, and many other benefits—and the costs employers incur in providing these benefits. Analysts prepare articles and reports on trends in benefits, on how private and government employee benefits differ, and also on such detailed topics as pension benefit formulas and what they yield.

Trends in labor costs—wages, salaries, and benefits—are traced by the Bureau's Employment Cost Index, a comprehensive measure that provides data by industry and occupational group, by region, for workers in unions and those who are not, and for government workers and those in private industry.

Other areas of study include current developments in labor-management relations. The Bureau reports on provisions of particular contract settlements and estimates changes in workers' compensation stemming from thse settlements. The Bureau also gathers data on union membership, reports on work stoppages, and maintains a public file of collective bargaining agreements.

In addition, BLS conducts surveys of businesses and workers on job-related injuries and illnesses to provide information needed by Federal and State agencies, unions, and employers to improve safety and health conditions in the workplace.

Employment and unemployment

Besides providing the monthly figures on employment and unemployment, BLS looks at the people behind the statistics. It examines the age, sex and racial and ethnic composition of the work force, the occupations and industries in which workers are employed, the level of education of those working and not working, and many other characteristics of the labor force. BLS staff investigate topics such as the changing patterns of regional employment and the employment status and problems of teenagers, blacks, Hispanics, older Americans, and women. One recent study surveyed employers on the childcare services and benefits they provide.

Prices and living conditions

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have declined 50 percent, from 43 to
83.

Conceding that reduced fatalities

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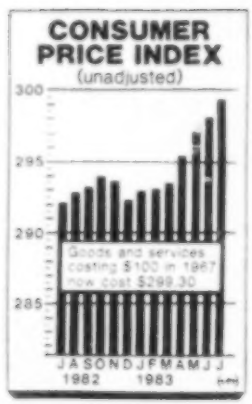

Modest increase

Food prices fell again, helping limit the July rise in consumer prices to 0.4 percent, the govern-

BLS prepares the key inflation indicators each month—the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and the Producer Price Index (PPI). Changes in the CPI affect the incomes of millions of wage earners and retirees, and business firms often tie their long-term sales contracts to changes in the PPI. BLS also reports on how households spend their money.

Statistics are compiled to determine, for example, how spending patterns differ for families versus single-person households or for consumers in the Northeast compared with those in the West or South. Market researchers, government officials, and others find the answers they need in the wealth of information BLS provides on price and expenditure trends.

In recent years, international prices have been in the spotlight. BLS export and import price indexes provide data for monitoring the trade deficit and the U.S. competitive position vis-a-vis foreign countries.

Productivity and technology

The Bureau measures productivity trends in the economy, in individual industries, and in government.

Bureau analysts study the factors underlying productivity change in industries as diverse as grocery stores and copper mining. They investigate the effects of new technology on the work force—how employment and skill requirements are changing with the introduction of robots in manufacturing, for example, or electronic funds transfer in banking. And they also study productivity trends abroad to provide information for assessing U.S. economic performance relative to other countries.

In addition, staff of an international training unit develop and conduct seminars for statisticians and economists from foreign countries.

Projections of economic growth and employment

What will the economy be like 10 to 15 years from now? The employment outlook is of vital importance to public officials, businesses, young people choosing careers, and to those responsible for career guidance and for planning education and training programs. BLS staff prepare comprehensive and detailed projections of the economy, including the size of the future labor force and its age, sex, and racial and ethnic composition; and employment in more than 200 industries and 500 occupations. The projections make use of a complex series of economic models and information from Bureau surveys, other government agencies, private industry, and other sources to provide some insight into likely future developments in the economy.

These projections are incorporated in the biennial *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, widely used in high schools and colleges for career guidance and exploration. Frequent updates on expected trends in employment are provided in the *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*.

Support offices

The work of the staff in the Bureau's support offices underpins the activities of all the program areas. The responsibilties of these offices are described briefly below.

The Office of Research and Evaluation works to improve the quality of all BLS statistics. Among its concerns are the appropriateness of the concepts and methods used and the selection of the statistical measures for judging the reliability of survey results. The office also administers the national longitudinal surveys of labor market experience and the research laboratory on collection procedures.

The Office of Field Operations, which includes the Bureau's eight regional offices, serves as the collection agent for data required by the program offices. Through both BLS staff and cooperating State agencies, data are collected for all major BLS programs. In addition, data are processed using state-of-the-art techniques and the office provides a wide range of data dissemination services to State and local governments, academia, business and labor organizations and the general public.

The Office of Publications publishes the results of Bureau studies. It employs economists and publishing professionals in its work of distributing the Bureau's findings through six periodicals, including the *Monthly Labor Review*, which is the Nation's oldest Government journal in economics and the social sciences. It also issues news releases, bulletins, and reports and responds to telephone and mail inquiries.

The Office of Administration oversees a broad program of administrative management and planning in support of the Bureau's programs, such as personnel recruitment and training, budget and accounting, management systems, and administrative services.

The Office of Technology and Survey Processing oversees the Bureau's automated data processing environment by determining and responding to needs for computer technology, including hardware and software, office automation, and telecommunications capabilities, and by conducting reviews of the use of technology throughout the Bureau. This office also processes the survey data that BLS collects.

Management Information Systems Staff evaluates the need for and designs and implements agency-wide systems of management information which incorporate a wide range of mainframe and micro-computer facilities.

Take a close look at the Bureau of Labor Statistics and you will find challenging work being performed by a dynamic staff equipped with the latest computer, economic, and statistical techniques. It is an agency whose data influence public policy, and whose employees can share in that contribution. Consider being a part of the Bureau of Labor Statistics and choose a career that is rewarding and challenging.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Regional Offices

Region I
Kennedy Federal Building
Suit 1603
Boston, MA 02203

Region II
201 Varick Street
Room 808
New York, NY 10014

Region III
3535 Market Street
P.O. Box 13309
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Region IV
1371 Peachtree Street, N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30367

Region V
Federal Office Building
230 S. Dearborn Street, 9th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604

Region VI
Federal Building
525 Griffin Street
Room 221
Dallas, TX 75202

Regions VII and VIII
911 Walnut Street
Kansas City, MO 64106

Regions IX and X
71 Stevenson Street
P.O. Box 3766
San Francisco, CA 94119

For more information,

For more information about the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the career opportunities it offers, write to:

College Recruitment/Special Programs,
Bureau of Labor Statistics,
441 G Street N.W., Room 2827
Washington, DC 20212

or call toll free:

1-800-523-5334